

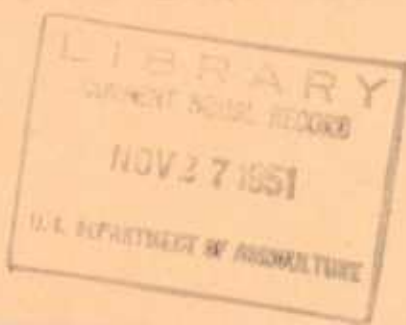
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*The*  
*Home Demonstration*  
*Agent*

*AIB 38—July 1951*

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



## **The Home Demonstration Agent's Objectives**

**To give to rural people, in a form in which they can use it at a time when they need it, information that will enable them to become better citizens in a democracy.**

**To help rural families obtain and manage an income—both money and nonmoney—that will contribute to better living for the family.**

**To develop leadership abilities in rural women and girls.**

**To develop an awareness of the need of improved facilities for medical care and of improved nutrition practices and other preventive measures in promoting improved health among all rural families.**

**To assist families in planning and making housing improvements in rural homes.**

**To develop an appreciation of the importance of recreation in rural homes and communities.**

**To develop in rural women and girls competence in using their human and material resources in ways that will contribute to better rural living, these ways based on the findings of research and the experience of homemakers.**

**To stimulate in rural people an awareness of the part they can play in making their communities more wholesome and attractive places in which to live.**

## Foreword

The history of the cooperative Extension Service is a story of growth in rural America—a growth of the soil and of the people who till the soil. Its over-all goal has always been to help rural people live better. To do this, it must take to these families not only the science of agriculture but that of homemaking as well.

This publication tells how the county home demonstration agent has gone about helping farm families to improve their homemaking. It also suggests some of the trends in rural life that she will want to take into account in planning her work in the future.

I believe that all county, State, and national extension workers will find this publication helpful, and that through its pages, rural leaders, civic leaders, and others will get a clearer understanding of the home demonstration agent and her work.

Women look to the home demonstration agent for help in the activities having to do with the home and family living. Girls turn to her for guidance and inspiration as they prepare for the future. Farm families generally feel she has a knowledge and a sympathetic understanding of their problems. All know she is a friend.

The home demonstration agent is known not only for her interest in improved family living and her appreciation of it, but for certain personal characteristics as well. Honesty, courage, initiative, common sense, and good judgment have become associated with her position. If she is thus outstanding, it is because the people with whom she works expect her to be the kind of person she is.

Learn more about the home demonstration agent and you will understand better the problems of the rural homemaker, the farm family, and how the Extension Service is contributing to the democratic process.

M. L. WILSON,  
*Director of Extension Work.*

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This bulletin is a revision of and supersedes Miscellaneous Publication 602.

July 1951

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## *Who Is the Home Demonstration Agent?*

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### *By way of introduction*

Cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics is a Nation-wide system of rural education. It is maintained to aid rural men, women, boys, and girls in meeting the ever-changing problems of the farm, the home, and the community and in developing for themselves a more satisfying country life.

This system was established by the Federal Government under the terms of the Smith-Lever Act of May 8, 1914, which provide for definite cooperation between the United States Department of Agriculture and the State land-grant colleges. Funds for the maintenance of the cooperative Extension Service are provided by Federal, State, and county governments and supplemented in a few States by cooperative organizations.

The county is the extension unit upon which the whole system is based. Here, at county level, are employed the county agricultural agent, the home demonstration agent, and, in some instances, the 4-H Club agent. Of the 3,107 counties which make up the United States, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and Alaska, 3,035 have the services of county agricultural agents; 2,527 have home demonstration agents; and 540 employ 4-H Club agents.<sup>1</sup>

All the extension agents in a county work cooperatively with the entire rural family, although the county agricultural agent's responsibility is primarily to the men and boys, the home demonstration agent's to the women and girls, and the 4-H Club agent's to both boys and girls.

This publication tells chiefly about the county home demonstration agent's work.

Valuable as her services are to counties in which she is employed, 580 counties in the United States, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and Alaska still do not employ a home demonstration agent. Rural homemakers in such areas have looked to the county agricultural agent and to State extension specialists in home economics and other fields for some help with their homemaking problems. The assistance of both agent and specialist has been concentrated on the organization of groups of rural women interested in homemaking education and the training of leaders to give homemaking information to these groups.

An outstanding result of such work has been the greatly increased interest in the counties in obtaining full-time home demonstration agents. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the number of such agents increased from 1,877 to 2,428 in the 10-year period ended July 1, 1950.

In addition to the 580 counties that do not have home demonstration agents, approximately 30 counties, mostly in the Southern States, have large enough Negro farm populations to justify the employment of a

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<sup>1</sup> Totals as of September 30, 1950.

Negro home demonstration agent, but do not now have them. In all, 388 Negro home demonstration agents are now employed in the Southern States, West Virginia, and Maryland.

### *She represents science in aiding the homemaker*

The average farm home of yesterday with its old-fashioned pump or rock-lined well has little resemblance to the modern farm home with its comforts and conveniences. A few years have accounted for these differences. Yet in this short span, a revolution in the history of homemaking has taken place.

Kitchens, convenient to work in and pleasant to look at; food, bountiful in supply and available the year round; refrigeration, well-designed and not too high in cost, are all modern developments—products for the most part of research in problems related to the home.

The changes brought about by such findings might have been slow indeed, had there not been someone to translate them into practical home use—someone who could help merge the results of research with the best homemaking practices already existing in the rural home. That “someone” in many instances has been the county home demonstration agent.

The same thing could be said of the work of the county agricultural agent, except that his work directly affects the agriculture of a county. Working jointly, these two agents are termed “county extension

*A Vermont home demonstration club meets to discuss the problems in building an enduring peace. The discussion is being led by the home demonstration agent.*



agents" and are the local representatives of the State extension service and the United States Department of Agriculture. Approximately 540 counties in the United States also have a full-time 4-H Club agent. All these agents working as a team are means through which improved practices in farming and homemaking are extended to the rural families of a county. Living among farm people, these county workers have aided them through war and peace, through drought and flood, through depression and prosperity.

Farming has been recognized by extension agents as both a way of life and a business. As a result, their teachings have emphasized not only economic production, conservation, and utilization of all crops and livestock, but nutrition and health needs, recreation outlets for the rural family, and many forms of farm and home improvement. The ends in view are always a more satisfying life for the rural family and a better rural citizenship.

### *She is a teacher*

The home demonstration agent is a teacher. Unlike the usual teacher, however, she works, not in a classroom, but in the home, the community, the field, and the garden.

The home demonstration agent—

- Helps farm people to see their basic problems and to solve some of these problems in the home, on the farm, and in the community.

- Takes into account the customs, habits, and interests of farm people.

- Helps farm women and girls decide what the content of their work in their club group is to be and assists them in carrying out such a program.

- Keeps her program flexible and makes changes in it as needs justify.

- Seeks to carry on programs that help to solve problems at hand but aim also toward long-time goals for better farm living.

- Follows a program of action—action by individuals toward improving farm and home life; action by groups to solve group problems.

- Keeps in mind in her work the desirability of preserving the family-size farm and the American way of life.

The average home demonstration agent works largely with rural families. Many families, however, who live in small towns and cities ask for her help also. The number of requests for help in home demonstration work in urban areas is increasing. In her effort to give assistance to a large number of families, the agent must make many decisions. There is the problem of whether to work with groups of families or with individual families. If she devotes much of her time to helping individual homemakers in single families to find a way out of their difficulties, she limits the total number of people she is to work with.

On the other hand, if too much time is spent in working with organized groups, she may lack the close touch she needs with rural families in their own homes. Then, too, homemakers who for one reason or another are not members of groups may not be reached at all. The home demonstration agent, therefore, must plan her work so that it will reach the largest number of people and do the most good in the smallest amount of time. In doing this, she employs many methods or teaching "tools." Some examples will illustrate:

A news story on insect control in which the agent points out how local gardeners have followed the method given them may be read by a thousand county newspaper subscribers. A weekly radio broadcast—or in some cases a television broadcast—in which she chats on

quick and easy ways of doing housework may be equally far-reaching. A circular letter outlining recommendations for home improvement may go to still different groups of homemakers. A training meeting for foods leaders from home demonstration clubs, at which the home demonstration agent teaches the making of cheese at home, may extend this practice to many additional families.

Demonstrations participated in by representative families have been an important means of convincing other families of the value of an extension agent's recommendation. Such "result demonstrations," as they are called, range from those having to do with the management of the whole farm-and-home unit to those relating to a single farm or home practice.

In fact, the result demonstration was the early basis for all extension work. Mrs. Jones, for example, will probably have much more faith in a home demonstration agent's recommendation when her neighbor has tried out a method emphasized by this recommendation and found that it works.

The work of subject-matter leaders in home demonstration clubs has also materially increased the number of farm families that receive benefits through the home demonstration program. (See section, *She Works Through Rural Leadership*, p. 8.) Home visits made by the home demonstration agent help her to see how effective her teaching has been. As a result of her home visits, also, she gains an understanding and appreciation of the problems of representative rural families.

In many instances home demonstration club leaders have worked hand in hand with local 4-H Club leaders and often have taken over the responsibility for giving 4-H Club girls instruction in their project work. Method demonstrations in which the agent teaches by doing, are an important part of her work. In these and many other ways, she actually extends her teaching to many persons outside the organized groups with which she works.

The home demonstration agent assists farm families in analyzing their own problems and arriving at their own solutions. Such help is backed up by the best information available from the United States Department of Agriculture, the State extension service, the college of agriculture and home economics, the State experiment station, and other reliable sources on subjects of special interest to homemakers.

In setting up a home demonstration program for all the people of the county, rural leaders—representatives of all income levels and agricultural areas—decide what needs are most pressing and what solutions most easily achieved. Then, with the agent, they plan how all groups working together can get the job done best.

Thus, by example and precept, by discussion and demonstration, the home demonstration agent has pioneered in the field of adult education. From the first, her formula has been simple, being for the most part the taking of practical, reliable information to people where they are, in the form in which they can use it, at a time when they need it.



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## *What Is the Home Demonstration Agent Like?*

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### *A composite picture*

The home demonstration agent is eager to help when you need her, whether it's advice you desire on a new hen house or facts you want about feeding the baby. If she doesn't know, she'll find out!

She's the one I want around when I'm convincing my husband we need a new house.

She's so human. That mortgage we'd worried about seemed easier to pay when we'd talked it over with her.

She's friendly, knows our names, waves when she passes \* \* \* stops by when you've been sick \* \* \* or in trouble.

These are just a few of the statements made by farm people in telling what characteristics they value in their own demonstration agent.

Urban families see the home demonstration agent in a little different light from that in which rural families see her. They see her coming and going from her office, often carrying strange paraphernalia. This may prove to be an old chair in the process of having its face lifted or a collection of home-made toys for children or perhaps a steam-pressure cooker! They say she's never too busy to stop and answer your questions about the kind of fertilizer to use in your garden or the way to can tomatoes; also that she's a good person to have on a library committee or to teach a Sunday-school class.

Not so well known about her, however, are some other characteristics equally important to her success in a county. Not everyone knows, for instance, that she is a college graduate with a bachelor of science degree in home economics and, in addition, may have taken some graduate work. Nor do they know that while in college she enrolled in special courses to fit her for home demonstration agent work. These may have included in addition to home economics subjects, work in home dairying, landscaping, poultry management, gardening, and extension methods.

In most instances, the home demonstration agent has grown up on a farm or has had considerable experience in working with rural people prior to becoming an agent. She has shown that she has an interest in rural families and an appreciation of their problems. Often she has had teaching experience in rural schools.

The home demonstration agent, even as the women she works with, has dreams for more convenient working arrangements herself. Though her office at the county courthouse is much improved over that of early years, she still hopes that sometime she can have one equipped with a complete kitchen, in which she can test out some of her recommendations and hold demonstration meetings.

She has many satisfactions in her job. She has the satisfaction of helping rural families to achieve richer, fuller lives; assisting in bringing about improved health and living conditions; seeing happier and more contented families in convenient and livable homes. All these are rewards in themselves.

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## ***What Does the Home Demonstration Agent Do?***

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### ***She must be able to find the answer to various questions***

The many-sided job of the home demonstration agent may be illustrated by the type of questions to which she is expected to know the answers. The following typical questions are among those asked home demonstration agents:

Our house is old and needs repair. Can you help us in planning to make it over?

Blight struck our tomatoes last year. What will prevent its coming again?

We would like to buy a farm, but are not sure that this is a good time. What do you think about it?

What are the prospects for getting a freezer-locker plant for our community?

My child is underweight. What should she eat to gain?

Where shall I send a pressure cooker to be fixed?

No two counties are the same. No two home demonstration agents work alike. However, their work has many characteristics in common. Long hours; travel over good and bad roads; meetings with rural women and girls; visiting demonstrations in home improvement, family living, production, conservation, and utilization of foods—all are part of a day's work. The way in which one agent tells of her day's work may be considered fairly typical of all.

### **A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A HOME DEMONSTRATION AGENT**

8 a. m.—Went by the office (in the county courthouse). Answered the mail and put finishing touches to a garden letter to be sent to rural and urban garden leaders. Wrote a brief news article for the local paper on the same subject, telling how two county gardeners made their gardens last year. Talked over joint 4-H Club work with the county agent. Gathered together illustrative material I'd need during the day for a 4-H Club leaders' training meeting and a home demonstration club meeting.

9:30 a. m.—En route to the 4-H leaders' meeting at D———, stopped at the Center Hill schoolhouse for a brief visit with E. B. Ryan, the principal of the school. It was recess and a host of 4-H Club boys and girls greeted me. Mary Barker requested that I send her mother a canning bulletin. Little Adele Smith told me her chickens had come. Mr. Ryan talked of the progress of the hot school-lunch program. I made a note to send him large-quantity recipes.

Left 4-H record books with Mr. Ryan to be given to Mrs. Arthur Oakley, the local 4-H Club leader. Mr. Ryan spoke well of Mrs. Oakley's work with the club.

10:30 a. m.—Arrived at D———. Found 4-H Club leaders assembled and local arrangements well in hand. Mrs. John Rader, president of the 4-H leaders' group, called the meeting to order and outlined the day's conference. Mrs. Albert Brown was asked to tell of the plans under way for a summer 4-H camp. Talk followed on the type of program desirable and the use of local facilities for the camp.

The county agent and I led a discussion on opportunities for training boys and girls in 4-H Club work. Leaders emphasized the part parents could be called upon to play in 4-H work. The need for recreation was also brought up.

Leaders broke up into separate project sessions for girls' and boys' work. A work period followed in which I gave a demonstration in clothing, showing how to instruct girls in making their club uniforms. The county agent talked about livestock problems and gave a demonstration in controlling cattle grubs. Leaders proposed that they plan a tour in which 4-H livestock projects could be visited.

Prior to adjourning, plans were made by the leaders for their next training meeting.

12 noon.—Stopped at the Roland Greens' for lunch. Had home-grown dinner—butter, fresh from the springhouse, new vegetables from the garden, country ham, buttermilk, and apple cobbler! Mrs. Green wanted help on refinishing some furniture. Worked out plans to make this a demonstration with the neighbors to be invited in. Noted date set.

1:30 p. m.—Drove 15 miles. Attended monthly meeting of the Woodberry Home Demonstration Club at Mrs. Lloyd Murphy's home. Twenty-one members and two visitors present. Members talked about the need for repairs on the church. They decided to make up a "sick kit," which anybody in the neighborhood could borrow. Committees were named to see about both items.

Foods leader gave a demonstration in egg cookery, pointing out food value of eggs, and the importance of using more at times when they were plentiful. Later she served the plain baked custard made as a part of the demonstration.

I discussed nutritional needs, showing photographs of examples of good and poor nutrition in children. Showed charts illustrating the vitamin and mineral content of common foods, but talked in terms of "more eggs, milk, butter, meat, and fresh vegetables" to furnish them.

After adjourning, group went to see the new storage cellar Mr. Murphy had built from plans I'd furnished him. It held canned fruits, vegetables, and meats; a barrel of winter kraut; some apples and several varieties of root crops. Mr. Murphy said he'd done all the work himself and planned to build a barn as soon as he could. Made note to remind county agent to send him plans to study.

4:15 p. m.—Started back to the office. Went by the Roland Petersons'. Mrs. Peterson is remodeling her kitchen. Helped her to work out a shelf arrangement so the dishes could be brought closer to her work areas. Commented admiringly on the plant bed Mr. Peterson makes each year. Talked with both of them about their next neighborhood night's program. Left bulletins on games and plays. Visited the garden. Was easily persuaded to take some greens home with me.

5:15 p. m.—Arrived at the office. Called the county agent's attention to my notes about him. He told of the REA meeting he'd attended that afternoon. Looked over my mail. Found two requests for information on canning. A third letter was from a garden leader who wanted some bulletins on making a coldframe. Two postal cards contained the place and date set for two pressure-cooker clinics in the Oak Grove and Harrell communities. Another letter was from a home-improvement leader, who reported on a recent demonstration in refinishing furniture which she had given in her neighborhood. Said she'd need six more bulletins.

5:45 p. m.—Went home for supper.

## *She uses the "family approach"*

Much of the value of the program of all extension agents is due to the manner in which they work cooperatively to help the entire family solve the problems of the farm and the home. The county agricultural agent, for example, works primarily with the men and boys on a farm, but he knows that the aim in all his work is better farm living. The county home demonstration agent, although concerned first with the problems of the mother and her daughter, recognizes that the whole farm set-up will determine the extent to which her recommendations can be carried out. Working together, she and the county agricultural agent plan for a county program that will most nearly meet the needs of all families.

As a result of this teaching approach, farm men are becoming as aware of and interested in the problems of the home as they are in those

of the farm, and farm women are beginning to take greater interest in the operation of the farm and in improving its management. They know they cannot have the comforts and the conveniences they'd like to have in the farm home unless the farm has been made a paying proposition.

Missouri's balanced-farming program centers attention on the farm family. The county agricultural agent and the home demonstration agent, working together, help families to develop and apply a balanced plan for improvement of both the farm and the home.

### ***She works in a broad field***

Rural women and girls have come to expect that the home demonstration program will include not only the findings of research as it applies to homemaking but assistance with many other problems that affect the well-being and happiness of their families. Thus, although they see that their study of foods and nutrition, of clothing, of home management, of child care and family life, and of housing is basic to their work, they are also concerned with broad problems in the fields of health, citizenship, economics, government, and rural cultural arts.

Mississippi home demonstration clubs, for example, have studied the health situation. Members have studied problems, talked over solutions, and put into practice many recommendations. Arkansas home demonstration clubs have undertaken through several years a study of citizenship responsibilities, good government, taxation, and the rural school. Maine home demonstration clubs tackled the job of getting ready for an epidemic and were ready when influenza did come. These are but a few examples of the ways in which organized groups have undertaken the study of broader problems that affect the well-being of the family.

### ***She passes on successful home practices***

As has been pointed out previously, the home demonstration agent has helped to translate into practical use the findings of research as they relate to the problems of the farm and the home.

Fully as important as this is her work in passing on to others the best practices and customs rural people themselves develop to meet changing times and conditions. One farm woman may find through experience, for example, that a certain working arrangement of her kitchen equipment permits her to save not only time but labor as well. Through the home demonstration agent, the idea may be carried to many other homemakers. Through her, too, farm women are enabled to voice their need for additional research on their problems.

### ***She works through rural leadership***

#### **DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL LEADERSHIP**

The development and organization of voluntary rural leadership has been, perhaps, the greatest single achievement of the extension agent. This has not been an easy task. Teaching skills and seeing them put into practice in individual homes is one thing. Finding and training

voluntary leaders and inspiring them to give time and effort to help others is quite another.

Fortunately, the growth of voluntary leadership in the home demonstration program has come about gradually and logically. Through it all, the home demonstration agent has come to recognize a few cardinal principles in working with leaders. She has learned, for example, that every rural group, large or small, rich or poor, can be counted upon to have a leader to guide that particular group; that leaders come out of the work of the group, not by springing into full being all at once, but by demonstrating their leadership when something happens to show them what they can do; that all people operate through some kind of group organization; that leaders must have been accepted by the group with which they are to work; and that the best leadership results when leaders are actually chosen by their own groups.

Voluntary leaders have served in many capacities from the very beginning of the home demonstration program. Some have remained quietly behind the scenes—giving a suggestion here, a prod there, a lift yonder, and standing behind the recommendations of the home demonstration agent. Some have become teachers themselves, passing on to their neighbors and their families the information they have acquired. Others, with special ability to organize, have been active in promoting new activities for their communities and in assuming leadership positions as home demonstration club officers. Still others serve as leaders of 4-H Clubs and in work with older youth. All contribute to the welfare of their communities according to their talents.

The qualifications of leaders who work with the home demonstration program are as varied as the work they do voluntarily and without pay. The individual leader must, of course, have the respect and confidence of her neighbors. She must have some prestige among them, or they will hesitate to follow her counsel; usually she must also have shown that she does her own job of homemaking well. She must, in most types of leadership positions, be willing and able to attend training meetings and bring back to her group the things she has been taught.

### **TYPES OF LEADERS AND THE WORK THEY DO**

In the field of voluntary leadership, development of the teaching or subject-matter leader is important. In every home demonstration club, or other group for that matter, certain members possess a skill or knowledge not in common usage. A member may, for example, be a good bread maker, the art having been handed down to her through several generations of her family. Another—knowing little about breads—may have great skill in making clothes for herself and her family. The home demonstration agent soon learns about such persons when she gets into a community. Thereafter, her problem is to induce these women to pass on their skills to their neighbors.

As the years have passed and increasing numbers of women and girls have asked for help, the agent has turned more and more to local leaders for assistance in home demonstration club work. As a result, leader-training conferences or schools have come into being. Here the agent not only has given leaders help in their subject matter but also in methods of teaching. She visits in their homes, giving them

individual help with particularly difficult problems. Always she leaves with them leaflets and bulletins they can study to get the "why" of an action as well as the "how."

Through such training, the leader acquires not only a new confidence in her own ability to pass on instructions but gains the prestige she needs if her neighbors are to accept her leadership. Gradually these leaders, variously termed "subject matter leaders," "home demonstration club leaders," "project leaders," have come to supplement greatly the work of the home demonstration agent. As early as 1930, many States were holding training conferences for these leaders. One of their jobs was to take over the method demonstrations to be given at both 4-H and home demonstration clubs for several months in the year. In this way these leaders have given the home demonstration agent time to form new groups, meet with unorganized groups of women and girls, and otherwise meet the ever-increasing demand for her services.

The number of subject-matter leaders in a club has varied with the need of the community, the interests of the women, and the type of program they are undertaking.

In some States, much of the training of subject-matter leaders is done by extension specialists, cooperating with the agent. In others, home demonstration agents train leaders but look to the specialist for help in improving training methods and in seeing that the subject matter is accurate.

Many project leaders, elected by local groups, have served in communities where there are no home demonstration clubs. Such leaders take the responsibility for getting groups together for special instruction by the agent. They also help her to prepare and assemble illustrative material.

Leaders who serve as club officers have a wide influence in determining both the content of the club program and the extent to which it reaches the families of a neighborhood. The regular officers of most home demonstration clubs are the president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and reporter.

The 4-H local leader for girls, or "sponsor," as she is sometimes called, may be a woman in the community who is especially interested in the problems of young people. She often has help from an older 4-H Club girl. In some States, the leader of the 4-H Club is the local school teacher. The 4-H local leader helps to plan the 4-H program, presents subject matter to the members, helps individual members with their club projects, and assists in arranging for other club activities. She counsels with the extension agents and attends leadership training meetings for 4-H Club work.

### REWARDS THROUGH LEADERSHIP

Almost without exception, leaders feel that they have been honored in being selected by their groups. Pride in their leadership results in their working hard to be the kind of leaders they are expected to be. As for pay, "We gain more than we can ever give," most of them say. An Oregon woman tells of the personal development brought about through leadership work. "I have seen women in my community develop into excellent leaders, able to take part in civic programs, conduct business meetings according to parliamentary procedure—women



*This homemaker is selecting a meal from her well-stocked pantry of home-canned foods.*

who were not able to stand before a group and make a simple announcement, now do these things well because of the training in leadership received in the extension program." Others say, "I have become a better neighbor and a more thoughtful person." "Hidden talents have come forth." "Leadership work has kept me on my toes." "It has created an incentive for a continued search for knowledge."

Perhaps the greatest reward a local leader receives is the public recognition that is bestowed upon her by a grateful community. Added to this is the appreciation expressed by her neighbors who through her have learned new and better ways to carry on their daily household tasks.

Women who have served their communities as either club officers or teachers of subject matter are often singled out for positions of leadership in other community affairs. Thus the women who develop their organization, leadership, and public-speaking abilities through work in local home demonstration clubs become more effective citizens. They are often found representing the interests of homemakers in State, national, and even international meetings. All of which suggests that although the development of vigorous voluntary leadership is often viewed chiefly as a means to an end, it is also a worthy end in itself.

## *She works through organizations*

### HOME DEMONSTRATION CLUBS

Home demonstration clubs have been a natural outgrowth of the rural woman's own thinking in many areas. For some years, before any organization of farm women had been set up, individual women

were chosen by the home demonstration agent to carry on special pieces of work in their own homes. Such "demonstrations," as they were called, were very simple. If, for example, the subject was gardening, the grower might agree to use the cultural methods recommended by the home demonstration agent and to keep a record of the products she sold and of those she used at home. As the garden grew, neighbors were invited to see for themselves how the new methods worked. Likewise, demonstrations were set up in poultry management, labor-saving equipment, home canning, and many other subjects. The selection of the demonstration projects depended on what the farm woman felt she needed to know as well as the agent's own judgment as to the needs of the family and the community.

The influence of these early demonstrations was widespread. But the individual demonstrators began to see that, valuable as their work had been, their agent might help many more women if they were banded together in some kind of group. The need for additional social contacts with their neighbors also entered into the thinking of these demonstrators. The practical example set them by the girls' canning clubs indicated that a somewhat similar group for women might be the answer.

And so, home demonstration clubs came into being. Sometimes, they were composed of both women and girls. More often, the membership was made up of women alone. They came to be known generally as home demonstration clubs, although in some States they are called by other names such as "home bureau," "home adviser group," and "homemakers' clubs."

Informal groups, meeting for the most part in the homes of the members, these clubs began to extend better homemaking practices over a wide area. In less than 35 years, local home demonstration club membership of farm and village women has grown to 1,408,717, and the number of different home demonstration clubs is now 60,361.<sup>2</sup>

Numbers, however, tell only part of the story. What is the purpose of these clubs? What is their program of work? How do they affect the lives of the average farm family? Answers to these questions are legion. Here are some of the answers given by individual farm women:

Home demonstration club work has enabled me to appreciate the real values in country living. By managing better and by applying labor-saving ideas, I have the time and energy to enjoy life.

Since I became a home demonstration club member, our study of foods has enabled me to feed my family better and at less cost.

I've learned a lot—how to keep food values in cooking, how to can and otherwise save our extra produce, how to clothe our family well at reasonable cost. But what I've been proudest of, is that I've been inspired to take a greater interest in broader things that affect our family happiness and well-being—citizenship, the church, the school, and good government.

Ordinarily, home demonstration clubs meet once each month throughout the year. Most often, the meeting will be held in the home of one of the members. All will take part in the program for the day. One member will be in charge of the devotions; another may have the responsibility for leading a discussion or reporting for a committee. The officers will preside, but the meeting is informal. The number of meetings at which the home demonstration agent will be present varies with the State, the number of clubs in a county, and the

<sup>2</sup> Totals as of December 31, 1950.



work of the agent outside the organized groups. In some States, she will attend only three or four meetings a year. In others, she may be present more often. When it is planned that she be present, the home demonstration agent will give a demonstration or lead a discussion on some new approach to homemaking problems.

Other times, club leaders take over the club program and give the demonstrations they have been trained to give by the agent or by the extension specialist. Such demonstrations may be anything from breadmaking to eliminating steps in laundering; from canning to making a family financial plan. In any case, they will be a definite part of a planned program decided upon by the club members themselves.

Meetings, however, are only part of the work of club members. In many States, each woman is enrolled for carrying out a definite demonstration in her own home. In addition, she is expected—and usually does—carry out the practices demonstrated at club meetings.

A democratic organization, the home demonstration club varies, depending on the needs of the area and the cultural background of the people.

Club members obligate themselves to carry to their neighbors what they have learned. As one farm woman puts it:

Home demonstration club work “rubs off” to many families not on club rolls. When one learns to can beans, it isn’t long until her neighbor over the back fence has learned too.

Of the 3,332,016 families influenced by home demonstration work in 1950, 42.28 percent were members of organized clubs or groups, while 57.72 percent were not members.

Living close to the soil and gaining most of their livelihood from it, the women who make up this organization see to it that their program is a practical one. At the same time, they do not fail to see the worth of a broad knowledge of their family needs. Believing that all work having to do with farm and home betterment should be “of” rather than “for” farm people, they work out their problems in their own way, looking to the home demonstration agent for counsel and guidance.

Home demonstration clubs assume responsibility for many so-called social action programs for their entire community. They may, for example, work toward obtaining health services for all the families; they may study and interpret legislation that has a bearing on family and community life; they may support plans for county and community libraries and library trucks, so that more books are made available to their communities. They are back of many movements for community improvement involving the good of the church, the school, and all the citizenry.

These and many other similar programs are a part of every home demonstration club. The influence of the work of these clubs extends far beyond their membership.

In most States, all the home demonstration clubs of a county are parts of a county organization. Sometimes this is called a “county council of home demonstration clubs.” Again it may be a “county federation of home demonstration clubs” or a “county federation of homemakers.” County organizations are, in turn, member groups of a State organization, and 36 State organizations have become parts of the National Home Demonstration Council.

Helpful as the county, State, and national groups have been in inspiring individual members, the strength of the entire system has always been in the local home demonstration club. Here at "grass roots" level, farm women meet, observe demonstrations, talk over their problems, decide what they want to do about them, and then go home to put their new knowledge into effect.

But the influence of the county, State, and national organizations must not be minimized. Through them, local home demonstration club members have an active voice in county and State planning relating to agriculture and homemaking. They also serve as a way through which national aims can be made known quickly to local communities.

The home demonstration club organization is not a pressure group. The philosophy of farm women leaders is that theirs is an educational work and that through education the cause of homemaking will best be served.

The "enrichment" program is a case in point. When the State nutrition committees sponsored bills for enrichment of certain foods, in several State legislatures, the home demonstration councils set out to acquaint their members with the need for the enrichment of flour, corn meal, grits, and oleomargarine. Health needs were discussed and enrichment pointed out as a means for improving the nutrition of the whole people. The State home demonstration councils went on record as approving the enrichment program. Through this and similar educational work, the merits of enrichment became generally recognized.

As has been indicated, the work of home demonstration clubs has varied from State to State and from region to region. Indeed, much of their progress may be said to have come from this fact. Developing differently under different situations, programs are such that each area has had many contributions to make to the others. Although some differences occur in methods for carrying on home demonstration work, club programs generally deal largely with fundamental problems having to do with foods and nutrition, child care and family life, health, home management, and financial security, housing and household equipment, clothing and the management of the wardrobe, and the production, conservation, and utilization of all home-grown foods.

Leaders have not been unmindful, however, of the influence of national and international problems that affect rural families. As a result, home demonstration club programs have included the study of government, citizenship responsibilities, international relationships, and the cultures of other lands.

Home demonstration club activities became increasingly important during World War II. Alert to war needs, both the agents and the leaders who work with them gave technical guidance and understanding leadership to rural families throughout the country. Fortunately long-time goals were not thrown overboard. Without sacrificing gains made through the years in bringing about improved homes and a more satisfactory family living, the million or more women who are in home demonstration club work adapted their whole program to meet war-time needs. Work having to do with nutrition, health, food production, and food preservation was given major emphasis.

The interest in home demonstration club work during World War II was accounted for by the realization on the part of farm women that their program was a war one and that in their club activities they were contributing as much to the war's end as if they were rolling bandages,

making surgical dressings, or working at other patriotic jobs. They saw in the production and conservation of foods and the repair and care of essential farm and home equipment a war work their training as home demonstration club members and farm homemakers equipped them to carry out with distinction.

#### 4-H CLUBS

As noted earlier, the first work of the home demonstration agent with girls was known as canning-club work. After Congress had passed the Smith-Lever Act in 1914, the activities of both boys and girls came to be known as 4-H Club work. The term "4-H" was chosen to represent the fourfold development of the individual boy or girl. The four "H's" stand for Head, Heart, Hands, and Health.

4-H Clubs are made up of boys and girls from 10 to 21 years of age and usually have from 10 to 30 members. As in organizations of farm men and women, 4-H Club members conduct their own meetings. They also plan their own program, basing it upon individual needs and interests and the good of the community. Meeting once a month or oftener, club members are kept abreast of the scientific findings of their colleges of agriculture and home economics and the United States Department of Agriculture. In some States, this instruction is given largely by volunteer local leaders trained by county extension agents. In others, both agents and leaders give instruction to club members. In either case the information is on subjects having to do with farming and homemaking problems. Each club member under the general direction of the local leader carries out on his or her own farm or in the home what has been learned through the club along a chosen line of work. For the 4-H Club girl, this "project," as it is called, may be preparation of a family meal, the growing of a garden, care of a poultry flock, care and ownership of livestock, making her own clothes, beautification of home grounds, improvement of a room, or some other work. In other words, the club member "learns by doing"—an important principle in 4-H Club work.

Much of the strength of the 4-H Club program lies in the work of local club leaders. Their breadth of understanding, their wealth of practical information, and their insight into the problems of their young neighbors have enabled them to have a strong influence on the lives of 4-H Club members and in the type of club work they do. During wartime, local club leaders kept their leadership of 4-H Clubs despite heavy labor shortages and many extra wartime activities. That 4-H Club work has inspired and helped to develop this dependable leadership, is a testimony to its worth.

Encouraging each club member to plan and carry out a project of his own has been a basic concept in 4-H Club work. The 4-H girl, for example, may begin a poultry project with 100 baby chicks or less. From this start, she may develop a flock of several hundred hens—the basis for a profitable enterprise when she has a home of her own. The 4-H boy, working with the county agricultural agent or 4-H Club agent, may likewise become the owner of a dairy herd or other livestock or farming undertaking through his club work.

Acquiring skills, learning how to solve management problems, even attaining property ownership are not the greatest benefits to boys and girls in 4-H Clubs. The inspiration they receive, the ideals they



***Living on a hard road and belonging to a 4-H Club, this farm girl is not isolated. She is president of her club, and has received inspiration and help from her county home demonstration agent.***

acquire, the leadership abilities they develop, outweigh the material advantages they gain. Some young men and women through 4-H Club work have been given the encouragement they needed to go through high school and college.

Many thousands of 4-H Club members have put their training in agriculture and homemaking immediately into effect in their own homes or on their own farms. Since a large number of replacements are needed each year to operate the more than 5 million farms in the United States, it is important to the long-time interests of agriculture and of the Nation that new farm opportunities be assumed by the best trained and best fitted young men and women as they reach maturity. It is hardly less necessary that young people who traditionally leave rural areas should carry with them a well-formed impres-

sion of farm situations. 4-H Club work seeks to accomplish both these ends.

The objectives of 4-H Club work may be simply stated:

To help rural boys and girls develop desirable ideals and standards for farming, homemaking, community life, and citizenship and a sense of responsibility for their attainment.

To afford rural boys and girls technical instruction in farming and homemaking, that they may acquire skill and understanding in these fields and a clearer vision of agriculture as a basic industry and of homemaking as a worthy occupation.

To provide rural boys and girls an opportunity to learn by doing through conducting certain farm and home enterprises and demonstrating to others what they have learned.

To teach rural boys and girls the value of research and to develop in them a scientific attitude toward the problems of the farm and the home.

To train rural boys and girls in cooperative action to the end that they may increase their accomplishments and, through associated efforts, better assist in solving rural problems.

To develop in boys and girls habits of healthful living, to provide them with information and direction in the intelligent use of leisure, and to arouse in them worthy ambitions and a desire to continue to learn in order that they may live fuller and richer lives.

To demonstrate to rural boys and girls methods designed to improve practices in agriculture and homemaking, to the end that farm incomes may be increased, standards of living improved, and the satisfactions of farm life enhanced.

What farm girls think of the home demonstration agent and the help she gives them in meeting their needs and interests is shown by their eagerness to join a 4-H Club. In 1950, 1,087,191<sup>3</sup> girls were enrolled in the United States, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and Alaska. Singly, these girls say of her, "She's a person who doesn't let you down!" "It's fun to tell her things; she always understands." "She makes me believe I can do things I hadn't thought I could do." "I'd like to grow up to be a home demonstration agent."

The average home demonstration agent spends 38 percent of her time in working with 4-H Clubs. In the average county of the United States, the 362 girls enrolled in the 29 4-H Clubs are interested in a great variety of projects and work to carry out in their own homes the things they learn in their club work. For example, in their work on food selection and preparation, the 362 girls in the average county during 1950 planned 3,810 and served 4,198 meals following instruction received at club meetings. They also canned 4,075 quarts of food, made 640 new garments, remodeled 205 old garments, improved 53 rooms, and made 196 articles in home furnishing.

Although numbers do not tell the whole story of the influence of 4-H Club work on improved family living, those covering the national accomplishments of members are impressive. For instance, 79,172 girls completed work in home-grounds beautification. Some of these girls landscaped their whole yard. Others did only parts such as grading and draining the lawn, establishing a cutting bed for shrubs, or getting a start with perennials.

Demonstrations in home gardening are always of interest to 4-H Club members. During 1950, 168,633 girls either grew a garden of their own or cared for the family garden—often in keeping with a well-planned canning budget. Part proof of the care these gardens received is shown by the fact that 176,454 girls canned almost 10 million quarts of food during the same year.

Clothing work undertaken by 4-H Club girls consists of making new garments, remodeling old ones, and studying their own clothing needs and the care of clothes. The 512,165 girls completing clothing projects in 1950 made more than a million and a half garments and remodeled 477,195 old ones.

Room-improvement projects were completed by 132,473 girls in 1950. Many of the home-improvement club girls refurnished

*Food preservation is an important part of 4-H Club work. This Allegany County, Md., girl learned to can early in her club experience. Now she helps her local 4-H leader teach the younger girls in her community.*



<sup>3</sup> This total is for the calendar year 1950.

old furniture, papered walls, made bedspreads, curtains, and rugs, and otherwise completely changed ordinary rooms to beautiful ones. Others improved only parts of rooms. Over 380,000 crafts articles made by 4-H Club girls in 1950 contributed to the interest and appearance of these rooms.

Meal planning and preparation has been a popular project with both the girls and their mothers. Over 21 million meals were planned and served by 391,946 4-H Club girls in 1950, according to 4-H standards.

Many boys and girls have learned to manage their money wisely through their 4-H Club work. During 1950, 337,289 boys and girls kept personal accounts. In their need to make every motion count, mothers and daughters studied together and put into practice many time- and energy-saving housekeeping methods.

The record of wartime achievements of 4-H Club members, boys and girls, has always been high. The extra pigs raised, the extra gardens grown, the extra jars of food canned, and the extra days worked by a single 4-H Club member may not seem impressive, but added to that of other club members, they reveal the fact that these "extra" efforts in 1944 alone produced enough food to feed 1 million soldiers for an entire year. At the same time, long-time goals for better rural living were not neglected.

4-H Club members make the following pledge, exemplifying the spirit of the "4-H'ers":

"I pledge my Head to clearer thinking, my Heart to greater loyalty, my Hands to larger service, and my Health to better living for my club, my community, and my country."

## WORK WITH OLDER YOUTH

As young people grow up they acquire many new and different physical, mental, and personal traits. They often feel too advanced for their former adolescent activities, but frequently they are not taken into adult organizations and affairs.

In all parts of the country, county extension agents have observed this situation. Many have done something about it. As far back as the late twenties, some special advanced activities were offered older 4-H Club members and young people beyond the 4-H Club age limit of 21 years. Extension agents gave special training in "buymanship," household accounts, and social graces for girls. Farm accounts, farm management, and father-son partnerships were popular topics for young men. Mixed groups met for joint discussion on farm and home-making subjects and to consider other topics of social and economic importance to the farm home.

The county home demonstration agent knows that only an eighth of all rural young people 18 to 26 years of age belong to any organized group, and she is concerned about the type of activity that does engage their time and attention. She sees strong evidence of commercialized competition with the home for the social activities of these young people. She worries, sometimes, about a few of the nighttime attractions that are tolerated by a fundamentally wholesome rural people.

She sees the basic problems of poverty, poor health, and lack of social opportunity. She wishes that each extension agent might be a dozen workers in order to carry on more of the constructive, wholesome, and educational programs that promote high ideals in older youth. She

wonders if the young people themselves can't organize and provide these opportunities, with the help of adults to sanction them and arrange a favorable atmosphere for their endeavors. No one solution, she recognizes, can be found to the problem.

So she, along with her fellow extension agents, follows several methods to reach and help older youth. Special efforts are made to bring older girls into home demonstration clubs along with married homemakers. Often they are given leadership responsibilities in these groups. Young-mother and bride groups are organized. Institute-type meetings are arranged in which health and personal hygiene, entertaining in the home, the arts, rural recreation, personality development, and other subjects of interest to older young women are taken up.

In many counties, coeducational rural youth groups are the organizations that implement the program with older youth. The local voluntary leadership needed to put a community program into action is developed in these groups. Emphasis is placed on education, recreation, and community-service topics and programs.

In 1950 there were 2,312 of these specially organized extension groups for older youth with 87,113 members, 39,963 of whom were young women. In addition, home demonstration agents worked with 89,179 young women who were not members of extension groups. Distribution of the membership in extension groups shows slightly more young men (54 percent) than young women. Eighty-one percent of these young people are out of school. Most of the young people reached have belonged to a 4-H Club, but a significant number have never been members of any group.

Objectives of the Extension Service program for older youth have been listed as follows:

- Provide opportunity for the fullest possible self-expression and individual development of older youth.

- Develop a wider appreciation of farming as a way of life, and create a better understanding between rural and urban people.

- Stimulate young people to acquire desirable knowledge and skills in farming, homemaking, and other vocations, and thereby improve their own standards of living and the Nation's efficiency.

- Provide vocational information and counsel that will assist young people in their selection of a life work.

- Provide opportunity for training in democracy and citizenship and for leadership experience as a basis for active participation in community organizations.

- Provide opportunity for study and discussion of broad economic and social issues.

- Emphasize the importance of community service and related activities and provide opportunity for older youth to participate in them.

- Encourage an appreciation of cultural values and provide opportunity for the social and spiritual development of young people.

## COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Home demonstration agents cooperate with representatives of many other agencies sponsoring educational and action programs in rural areas. Public-health nurses, for example, are assisted in setting up and operating well-baby clinics and in establishing clinics for expectant mothers. Home demonstration clubs or other groups are encouraged to request the assistance of the nurse in teaching members first-aid work, the simple care of the sick, and preparations for the new baby.

Home demonstration agents help to publicize other measures sponsored by local and county public-health units such as malaria control, sanitary inspection of public eating places, and milk-processing plants.

Program chairmen of home demonstration clubs extend invitations to representatives of organizations such as county and State tuberculosis associations, local, State, and national cancer-control societies to discuss with home demonstration club members the objectives and goals of their organizations and the part rural homemakers can play in helping to achieve them.

Working in cooperation with other home economists in the counties and with representatives of health and welfare agencies, home demonstration agents have helped to organize county and local nutrition committees. As members of these committees, the agents are making a contribution to the coordinated effort to improve the nutritional status of the people.

Some home demonstration agents have qualified as Red Cross instructors and have taught nutrition and canteen courses outlined by that agency. They have counseled with committees responsible for furnishing lounge rooms and equipping kitchens for recreation centers. All agents have cooperated with county and State organizations in promoting home-garden, food-preservation, and consumer-education activities.

They have helped to interpret to rural families the objectives of the other Department of Agriculture agencies such as the Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics, the Farmers Home Administration, and the Soil Conservation Service. They have assisted farm-labor representatives to recruit and train workers and have helped to work out mutually satisfactory relations between employer and employees.

Parent-teacher associations in rural communities frequently call on the home demonstration agent to lead discussions at their regular meetings on better meals for school children. Sometimes they solicit the agent's help in launching the school-lunch program and in equipping the food-preparation unit. Frequently many of the members of the P. T. A. are also home demonstration club members.

In the larger centers many homemakers are members of urban women's clubs. Frequently these clubs call on the home demonstration agent to discuss with their members matters such as recent findings in the field of nutrition, and recommended procedures in food conservation and gardening. After food rationing was put into effect, many agents were asked to appear on club programs to discuss with members ways in which they might provide their families with a good diet within the limitations of their ration points.

## *She achieves results*

### WORK WITH FARM FAMILIES

The effect of the work of the home demonstration agent on farm family living in general may be judged from typical statements of rural homemakers throughout the country:

The home demonstration program has done much for rural life in our county. The work is not spectacular, but there are many, many homes that



might testify to the benefits, inside and outside. \* \* \* The help received in foods, in clothing, in business management, in yard improvement, in interior decorating, in making money go farther, and in gardening and canning have given an education to many who had been deprived of it. (Nebraska.)

It has brought about a feeling of comradeship and cooperation among farm women and their families. We have learned to bring beauty, art, music, and literature into our rural homes. This has created in us a feeling of pride in our homes and surroundings—a pride shared by the entire family. (Colorado.)

Home demonstration work has taught me and others the importance of the vocation we have chosen—the vocation of homemaking. It is the most interesting job a woman has to do. It takes all her time and a great many ideas to “put it over” successfully. Yes, it’s a big job. (Louisiana.)

The timid person who thought she had nothing to offer is making a worthwhile contribution in community activities. Many a homemaker who was “much concerned over the little things” of everyday life has found a new outside interest that has made her more efficient, a more understanding mother, and a more useful citizen in her community. (West Virginia.)

The foregoing expressions indicate something of the rural homemaker’s wide range of interest and the extent to which the home demonstration program is meeting some of her needs.

### AS A MATTER OF RECORD

Additional statements made by farm women will serve to show the rural family’s full participation in this program for better rural living.

A Missouri farm woman has expressed her own ideas of what she has obtained—

Although I live in only a little cottage, I have food prepared and served in the right way, good beds made correctly, and plenty of fresh fruits and flowers.

*This home demonstration agent is showing local leaders how to lay out a pattern to best advantage.*



While there is not man-made entertainment, all of God's nature is spread out for our enjoyment \* \* \*.

Through extension work we have learned to make the best of what we have and in that have found contentment.

Sometimes the farm woman's appreciation is expressed in the creation of beautiful articles she has been taught to make, either for sale or for improvement of the home. A hooked rug may have woven into it the varied landscapes the farm woman sees from her window. A wood carving may have designs taken from living motifs of trees and wild flowers. Rural women have found in certain handicrafts not only an outlet for their artistic longings but an important means for adding to the family income.

Music appreciation has been taught in adult groups, and in youth groups as well.

In recent years, as a part of their international programs, members of home demonstration clubs have studied the music of countries all over the world. In doing so they have gained a new appreciation of their world neighbors.

Rural leaders have seen in such study not only a new understanding of the culture of those countries, but a renewed appreciation for their own way of life.

Increasingly, rural people have found time to join together and establish community clubhouses and to stage family recreation evenings.

Good reading has been a part of all home demonstration programs. Community book stations have been sponsored, bookmobiles have been purchased, and county libraries have been kept open through the efforts of home demonstration club members.

Assistance in food production, especially home gardening and home dairy and poultry activities, has continued to be an important part of the home demonstration agent's work in a large part of the United States.

The conservation of foods has accompanied this work in food production. The work of the home demonstration agents has resulted not only in increasing the quantity and quality of home-grown foods, but in improving food habits and methods of cookery. Homemakers have studied the preparation of foods in ways that will keep the greatest food value and make them pleasing in taste and appearance. Special attention has been given to the feeding problems of young children.

A farm woman in Oregon summed up the aims of the clothing program in this way:

Through our study of textiles and clothing, we learn to judge quality and value of materials and are able to stretch our clothing budgets farther and at the same time are better dressed.

The homemaker is constantly on the alert for short cuts to simplify her housework. With this in mind, extension specialists adapt the principles developed by industrial engineers to the homemakers' needs and these are explained and demonstrated to homemakers by the home demonstration agent.

Assistance has also been given families in planning for greater financial security. As the economic situation has improved, home demonstration agents have led groups of rural women in the study of farm and home problems, in the adoption of workable budgets, in postwar plans for the purchase of new equipment, and in plans for the repair

and remodeling of homes and for the construction of new homes, largely through the use of materials available on farms. Under this plan it has been necessary for these groups to spend only small amounts of money for home construction and remodeling, and many farm families have thus built homes economically in periods when commercial materials were at a premium.

Some of the most far-reaching results of county extension agents' work have come out of their assistance to groups in organizing for cooperative action. Health cooperatives, marketing cooperatives, and consumer cooperatives are typical results of such action.

Work in family life and child development has always been part of the home demonstration program. The impact of World War II on family living brought many new problems to be reckoned with. In assisting local groups to solve such problems, the home demonstration agent has found that principles involved in family-life education vary but little in peace and war.

Home demonstration clubs have attacked the problem from many different angles. Their club programs have included such topics as Family Health and Safety; Getting Along With Others; Youth and Its Problems and Opportunities; The Care of Young Children; Family and Neighborhood Recreation. Local home demonstration club lead-

*These children in Erie County, N. Y., play on home-made equipment at a play center arranged by their mothers as a part of their home demonstration activities.*





*The members of this family are planning their home garden with the aid of bulletins supplied by the home demonstration agent.*

ers in family-life and child-development work have led discussions and group meetings on the subject. They have also counseled with their neighbors on family-life problems.

Home demonstration agents have made outstanding use of the radio in extending family-life education. During 1949-50, they broadcast 40,686 home demonstration programs in counties throughout the country. Some home demonstration agents are also using television broadcasts.

Records indicate that 392,014 parents were assisted in child development and guidance problems and 471,700 families were helped in improving family relationships in 1950.

Many of the most significant results of the family-life and child-development programs are intangible. They will be best expressed, perhaps, in the enriched life of the family group as the years go by.

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## *The Negro Home Demonstration Agent Plays Her Part*

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Paralleling the work of the white home demonstration agent with white families is the work of the Negro home demonstration agent with Negro families. Negro home demonstration agents are employed in 430<sup>4</sup> counties of the United States in the 17 States having large Negro farm populations.

The esteem in which Negro home demonstration work is held by farm leaders is shown by the growth in number of agents through the years. The first Negro woman agent to be employed to do county work was appointed in Okfuskee and Seminole Counties, Okla., on January 1, 1912. She continued in both counties for 8 years and then worked only in Okfuskee County for an additional 4 years. Other agents were added in counties as the value and significance of their work came to be known. By 1923, Negro home demonstration agents were employed in 100 counties in 11 States. More than half this number were employed in 4 States, Georgia, Mississippi, Texas, and Arkansas. By September 30, 1950, 13 of the Southern States were employing a total of 393 Negro home demonstration agents. In addition, Delaware had 2; Maryland, 13; Missouri, 6; and West Virginia, 17.

Food production and preservation were emphasized throughout the early years of Negro extension work much as it has been with white families in the South. The canning demonstrations given by the early Negro home demonstration agents are of particular interest. Usually, large hot-water canning outfits were set up. Consisting of two zinc tubs, a zinc foundation and top, with an elbow and two joints of stove-pipe, these relatively crude canneries were fairly efficient, having a capacity of about 500 quarts daily. Such an outfit was assembled in a community, usually at the Negro schools or church grounds. Crude furnaces and stoves were rigged up in a grove of trees; families brought tomatoes and, under the direction of the home demonstration agent, processed them for winter use. The idea spread rapidly and became a general practice in the homes of many Negro farm families. As in work with white families, Negro men were no less interested in food production and preservation than were the women. They, of course, were especially conscious of their responsibility from a production point of view.

Work with Negro families, having proceeded beyond the experimental basis, was rapidly expanded. Emergencies arising out of the entry of the United States into World War I and the expanded need for the production of food and feed were considered good reasons for further expansion.

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<sup>4</sup> Total as of September 30, 1950.

Negro work had made much progress by 1923, so much so that extension leaders began to view the work of Negro agents as a possible means for the solution of some economic and other problems arising from the presence of Negroes in such large numbers on southern farms.

Local aid for financing Negro work was often the first to be cut off when county finances were not in good condition. In many counties during the 1920's Negro work was discontinued entirely. In others the services continued, although the workers received no pay except the gratitude of those with whom they worked. As a rule, however, once given a fair test, the extension program has received the approval of the large majority of the people in a county.

Funds for Negro home demonstration work increased from \$146,-254.89 for the fiscal year 1926 to \$1,325,332.34 for the fiscal year 1950. The policy of the Extension Service has been to place Negro extension workers in those parts of the States where the Negro farm population is large enough to warrant the employment of Negro agents.

The amount of funds devoted to the employment of Negro agents and the total number of Negro workers engaged in extension are not adequate indications, however, of all the work with Negroes, since white extension specialists and white county extension agents give some time also to Negro extension activities. Extension specialists in both agricultural and home economics subjects assist in training Negro farm and home demonstration agents much as they do the white agents. They also counsel with them as to the best methods for teaching their subjects.

White extension workers have frequent conferences with the Negro agents on the county program of work. The best of cooperative relationships exist between white and colored agents. Where there are no Negro agents in a county, the white agents give help to Negro families. In such instances, the white home demonstration agent works largely through Negro leaders in extending the same information to Negro farm families that is extended to white families. White supervisory agents work closely with Negro supervisors in bringing about a coordinated program for all agents in a county.

Negro home demonstration work has been kept to fundamentals through the good judgment of its leaders. The "live at home" program, in which all families are urged to provide their own food and feed in addition to raising cash crops, has been the basis for the home demonstration agent's teaching.

Other phases of Negro work have centered around practical home improvements, thrift practices, care and use of household equipment, and simple home-grounds planting. As a rule, teaching by the Negro home demonstration agent has been simple and direct. It aims toward carrying out the advice of Seaman A. Knapp—"Get down to where people can understand, touch bottom, and lift."<sup>5</sup>

One of the greatest single factors contributing to the success of Negro extension work has been the tact with which Negro agents attack the problems of their race. Possessed of an innate good judgment, the Negro home demonstration agent has not only influenced better farming and better homemaking practices, but has helped to give white people a new understanding of Negro problems. Her man-

<sup>5</sup> WOODARD, J. L. NEGRO ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1928. Ark. Agr. Col. Ext. Typewritten Rpt. 16 pp. Fayetteville. 1928. (See p. 11.) [On file in State Office, Ark. Ext. Serv.]



*This mother, a member of a home demonstration club, and her daughter, in 4-H Club work, get help from the home demonstration agent in making a knee-hole desk out of an old washstand.*

ner of working and the results she achieves are very similar to those of the white home demonstration agent.

The manner in which Negro farm folk have accepted the aid of county agents is illustrated in the following account of one Negro district home demonstration agent.

I visited Rachel Anthony, a demonstrator in L———— County on the 11th of November. I found growing in her garden carrots, parsnips, beets, onions, spinach, turnips, snap beans, butter beans, eggplant, sage, pepper, mustard, parsley, rutabaga, and flowers. Just across the driveway was a well-kept orchard. I entered the living room and found it furnished neatly and simply, but well. The kitchen had a spacious pantry adjoining it, filled with canned products. I found the owner had worked out a canning budget to meet the needs of her family. Mrs. Anthony has been working with the Negro home demonstration agent for 8 years. The results speak for themselves.

Much of the work of the Negro home demonstration agent, like that of the white agent, is conducted through organized groups of women and girls. As of December 30, 1950, there were 5,316 home demonstration clubs for Negro women in 17 States with an enrollment of 131,767, and 8,681 4-H Clubs with 182,785 Negro girls.

At the end of 1950, it was estimated that the Negro home demonstration program had directly resulted in 192,098 Negro farm families' changing their homemaking practices for the better; 56,811 other homes also changed practices. Thus her work, like that of the white home demonstration agent, extends far beyond organized groups of women and girls. Its greatest influence throughout the South can be measured only in terms of happier and more contented Negro farm families.

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## *How Did the Home Demonstration Agent Come To Be?*

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### *By way of history*

I have begun a work among the girls \* \* \*. The direct object is to teach some one simple, straightforward lesson to the girls on the farm, which will open the way to their confidence and that of their mothers, and will at the same time open their eyes to the possibilities of adding to the family income through simple work in and about the home.<sup>6</sup>

This statement made in 1910 by Dr. Seaman A. Knapp, founder of extension work, is one of the first accounts of a work that was to grow into that of the home demonstration agent. Much spadework, however, had preceded this action.

In the South, the pioneer work of Marie Cromer, of South Carolina, Ella Agnew, of Virginia, and others with rural girls started with canning clubs. Girls were enrolled in these clubs, each agreeing to grow a tenth of an acre of tomatoes and to can them by the methods recommended by these women leaders.

Farm women had participated, particularly in the Midwestern and Eastern States in farmers' institutes. A few Illinois women, interested in the application of science to housekeeping methods, decided as early as 1898 that special subjects for farmers' wives and daughters ought to be presented at county farmers' institutes.

Reading courses were set up in New York State in 1900, and similar plans for reading were worked out later in Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Michigan, West Virginia, and South Dakota. Speaking of this work before the Illinois State Farmers' Institute in 1904, Martha Van Rensselaar, Supervisor of Farmers' Wives Reading Course, Cornell University, said in effect: The aim is to lead the farm woman out of a rut, to remind her that her success in the home depends in large measure on her care and wise judgment, upon her serenity and hopefulness, and that for all these responsibilities, she is to read widely and intelligently.<sup>7</sup>

In a study made by the United States Department of Agriculture the wives of crop reporters had been asked to suggest ways in which the Department could render more direct service to the farm women of the United States. The replies from over 2,200 women from all parts of the United States expressed, for the most part, the loneliness, isolation, and lack of social and educational opportunities on the farm.

Rural women also appealed through the pages of farm magazines, pointing out a need for help with their homemaking problems. All

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<sup>6</sup> MARTIN, O. B., THE ABC OF FARM AND HOME DEMONSTRATION WORK: SELECTED FROM THE WRITINGS AND SPEECHES OF DR. SEAMAN A. KNAPP. Tex. Agr. Col. Ext. C-70, 7 pp. 1929. (See p. 6.)

<sup>7</sup> ILLINOIS FARMERS' INSTITUTE, ANNUAL REPORT . . . WITH REPORT OF COUNTY FARMERS' INSTITUTES AND AFFILIATED DOMESTIC SCIENCE ASSOCIATIONS FOR THE YEAR 1904. 258 pp., illus. Springfield. 1904. (See pp. 100-103.)



this had a far-reaching influence, not only in bringing about a new service to farm families, but in establishing types of instruction adapted to different areas.

Women lecturers on home economics subjects took part in farmers' institute work early in the history of the institutes. In many States, particularly in the North, the work done by these lecturers was to serve as a sort of pattern later, when home demonstration work was set up. Work in such States was first organized directly with groups of homemakers and not, as in the South, as an outgrowth of girls' canning-club work. Much of the instruction was carried to these groups by home economics specialists and agents who served six or seven counties. Indeed, the number of such workers greatly exceeded the number of county home demonstration agents in the North as late as 1917.

The first home demonstration agents in this area were well trained in home economics, but had little training in poultry management, gardening, and dairying. Few of these projects appeared in county extension programs for women.

The number of county home demonstration agents increased much more rapidly in the South. By June 30, 1917, there were 520 of them.

The novel work of the "canning club agents" in the South, attracted wide attention and comment. So much so, that the General Education Board contributed to this newest phase of extension work. For the most part, the early agents employed in the South were rural school teachers who often worked only during two or three summer months. These teachers were fortunate choices in many respects. They were women in complete sympathy with the problems of the rural homemaker and her daughter. This fact, together with their own practical farm background and desire to be of service, enabled these agents to lay a sturdy foundation for the later work of the home demonstration agent.

Having achieved entree into farm homes through their interest in the daughters in these homes, the "canning club women," as the county home demonstration agents were affectionately called in the South, soon included work with women as a part of their program. As local appropriations were made, agents were employed for a longer period of time. Public-spirited citizens generally began to recognize the new work for women and girls.

At the time of the passage of the Smith-Lever Act in 1914, 279 full-time canning-club agents were already employed in the South.

The home demonstration program developed differently in different areas. "Plain need," according to Russell Lord, "has held most of the South to a bread-and-greens level of operations and has kept its agricultural extension programs \* \* \* simple." "\* \* \* slogans," he says, "have been dinned into southern ears: 'Farm to live,' 'Live at home,' 'Make a garden,' 'Get a pig, a sow, a hen.' The main idea has been not more cotton, but better cotton, to provide more money for shoes, homes, and schooling."<sup>8</sup>

Home demonstration work in the South was planned to contribute directly to both family living and family income. As a result, home demonstration agents have worked with women and girls in home dairying, gardening, canning, and poultry management and in addi-

<sup>8</sup> LORD, R. THE AGRARIAN REVIVAL, A STUDY OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION. 236 pp. New York. 1939. (See pp. 96-97.)

tion have helped them meet other home-improvement and family life problems.

The traditional influence of colleges of home economics on the home demonstration programs of the Northern and Western States has been reflected in the subject matter taught. Hence, home economics, as such, has been given major emphasis and, as previously indicated, less work has been done on gardening, home dairying, and poultry work, these being considered more in the field of the county agricultural agent.

For the most part, however, home demonstration programs in all States developed according to Dr. Knapp's admonition to keep things simple and not to confuse people. He said, "Do not go before your people with an elaborate program. Your value lies in not what you can do, but in what you can get the other people to do."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> TEXAS EXTENSION SERVICE. SELECT QUOTATIONS FROM DR. SEAMAN A. KNAPP. Tex. Agr. Col. Ext. C-100, [8 pp.] 1933.

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## *Who Is Back of the Home Demonstration Agent?*

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### *The organization of which she is a part*

All county extension agents are a part of the land-grant college of the State in which they work. Sometimes, they are referred to as non-resident faculty members. Again they are termed an "arm" of the land-grant college. County extension agents are also a part of the United States Department of Agriculture under an arrangement in which the State extension service works cooperatively with the Federal Extension Service of the Department. Other persons, too, make up the Extension Service and assist county extension agents in giving service to rural families.

An extension director in each State is administratively responsible for the conduct of all extension work. Four States and Puerto Rico employ an assistant director in charge of home demonstration work. In all other States, a State home demonstration agent or leader is responsible to the extension director for home demonstration work.

In each of 34 States, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico, from 1 to 14 other women work with the State home demonstration agent in directly supervising the work of county home demonstration agents. These women are called district home demonstration agents in some States and assistant State home demonstration leaders in others. Their work is much the same in all States. This small supervisory force is responsible for promoting good relationships with other agencies and individuals, maintaining home demonstration agent personnel in counties, and assisting agents in planning and developing a sound educational program.

In addition to the administrative and supervisory staff just mentioned, in each State one or more State 4-H Club leaders are in charge of the organization of boys' and girls' 4-H Club work.

Much of the strength of the extension program is due to the efforts of the State extension specialists, who have their headquarters at the State land-grant colleges. They are the men and women who help develop a State-wide program in their respective subjects. The county agents depend on them in keeping up to date on the latest findings of science as they apply to agriculture and homemaking. The specialists help keep the agents alert and their teachings accurate.

The influence of the specialists in changing farm and home practices is difficult to trace, since much of their work is done through others—county extension agents and rural leaders. Even so, they come into direct contact with many farm families through direct visits to farms and homes, lectures, leader-training meetings, field meetings, and correspondence.

In States not having county home demonstration agents in all counties, specialists often work directly with rural homemakers or groups

of rural homemakers. The most effective use of the specialists' time, however, has been in counties that have agents.

The number of extension specialists varies from State to State, depending upon the program and the funds available for specialist help. On an average, seven women specialists are employed in each State. This does not represent all the assistance given home demonstration work, however, for agricultural specialists in horticulture, poultry husbandry, agricultural engineering, and other fields closely related to home economics also work on the home demonstration program.

In February 1944 the Extension Service was allotted emergency funds from the War Food Administration to be used in stimulating the emergency production and conservation of foods. A total of 1,350 war food assistants were placed in counties. Of these, 798 were war food-preservation assistants.

Some of these war food-preservation assistants were placed in counties without home demonstration agents. Others served as assistants to the regular home demonstration agent. All worked toward a larger production and more efficient utilization and conservation of foods. Their achievements were notable in the victory-garden and in the food-conservation programs.

Agricultural and home economics research and resident staffs of colleges of agriculture and other cooperating institutions have contributed greatly to the subject-matter content of the home demonstration agent's teaching. They are also responsible for much of the training of the young women who are to become home demonstration agents.

Relatively speaking, the number of State extension workers is small compared with the number of county extension agents employed. The same thing may be said of the number of workers employed by the Federal Extension Service as contrasted with the number of workers in the State extension services. The Federal Extension Service works with the State extension services on a cooperative basis on problems having to do with the administration, supervision, and training of all extension workers.

### ***Other cooperating agencies and organizations***

All home demonstration personnel rely upon the Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics of the United States Department of Agriculture for recent and reliable information on all phases of homemaking. Home demonstration agents, in turn, serve as mediums through which the findings of that Bureau can be taken to the rural homes of the Nation and translated into action there.

Research findings of other Divisions of the Department of Agriculture are used frequently by home demonstration agents in their work with rural families. Included in this group are the Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine; Bureau of Animal Industry; Bureau of Dairy Industry; Bureau of Plant Industry, Soils, and Agricultural Engineering; Bureau of Agricultural Economics; Rural Electrification Administration; and others.

The research of other agencies and institutions such as the United States Public Health Service and the Children's Bureau of the Federal Security Agency, also provides the home demonstration agent with much valuable information.

## *Increase in number of home demonstration workers*

Four decades have passed since the first home demonstration agents were appointed. Though there has been a steady increase in the number of counties employing these agents, 580<sup>10</sup> counties in the United States, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and Alaska still are without them. A total of 2,839 county home demonstration agents, 747 assistant home demonstration agents, 155 district home demonstration agents or assistant State leaders, 386 women specialists, 44 State home demonstration agents or leaders, and 4 women assistant directors are employed in home demonstration work.

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<sup>10</sup> Totals as of September 30, 1950.

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## *What Lies Ahead?*

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### *New opportunities*

The home demonstration agent faces many new opportunities to be of service in the years to come.

Health is recognized as one of the Nation's most serious problems. Records of the United States Public Health Service show the situation to be worse in rural than in urban areas. The fact that farm youth 18 and 19 years old showed the highest selective-service rejection rate for physical, mental, or educational defects of any occupational group—41 percent as compared with an average of 25 percent for other groups—indicates the seriousness of the rural need. One of the home demonstration agent's greatest challenges is to help rural families study their health needs and to assist them in taking an active part in planning solutions to their problems.

An educational program to do this takes into account not only the need for increased emphasis on food production, selection, conservation, and utilization, and on nutrition, but other protective health measures as well. Cooperating with State and county health authorities, the home demonstration agent helps rural families to see the need for adequate medical services and hospital facilities for their communities and to make provisions for these services and facilities. Sanitary and other disease-control measures also fit into this educational program. The spread of information on the use of DDT is only one of the opportunities open to the agent.

Perhaps it will be as important to attack problems relating to mental health as those of physical well-being. The extension agent's part in this may be to give increased help to rural communities in providing adequate recreational and educational facilities for all the families of the community. Such a program will have as its aim contented, happy, and well-adjusted families.

Other aspects of rural living—problems related to clothing, housing, the management of time, money, and human resources, and family relationships—will continue to be parts of the program of the home demonstration agent. The content of her teachings in these fields will, of course, vary as research findings and technological developments show need for change. Indeed, many of these changes are already in the making. For example, as a result of the developments in the construction of home-size freezer units, the emphasis in food preservation has been shifting to some extent from canning to freezing. In like manner, developments in textile chemistry, in clothing manufacture, and in the selling field may lead to greater emphasis on clothing selection and less on construction of garments.

Research in the field of psychology may greatly modify both the program content and the teaching methods used in child development and parent education and in family and community relationships.

## ***Problems in the field of agriculture***

That the welfare of rural families is tied in with price and market economy is becoming increasingly evident. Since this is true, the home demonstration agent needs to have an understanding of such subjects as marketing farm products, price support of farm products, farm ownership, land values, farm credit, land tenure, and farm leasing arrangements. She will need to be informed on the proposed solutions of such problems and the relation these solutions bear to sound agricultural policy. She must also be aware of certain other changes taking place in the locality in which she works. The increased mechanization of farming, the ownership and operation of large economic units, the decentralization of industry, and the urbanization of rural areas all must be taken into account.

## ***Other factors affecting the home demonstration program***

Many of the problems of rural families can be solved only by group action. If facilities for improved health and medical care are to be made available to all rural people, if young and old are to have access to suitable recreational facilities, if improved educational opportunities are to be everyone's privilege to enjoy, the combined action of a people is necessary. A thorough program of education usually precedes action on such problems. It is here that the home demonstration agent and the groups with which she works can make an effective contribution.

There are many evidences of the worth of such an educational effort. By way of illustration, one can point to successful school-lunch programs, to the program for cooperative medical care in the sand-hills region of Nebraska, and to the food-enrichment legislation now on the statute books in many States.

Many of these larger problems can be solved only if all agencies serving rural families pool their efforts. The part families play in keeping a just and lasting peace will depend upon their understanding of lands, peoples, cultures, and ideologies other than their own. The home demonstration agent must be ready to help them gain this understanding.

The whole field of voluntary rural leadership presents many new possibilities to the home demonstration agent. Though progress has been made in the use of this force to extend extension teachings to all rural families, much remains to be done. The home demonstration agent will need a knowledge of the basic principles of effective leadership. She will need to train leaders (given assistance from specialists and others) not only in subject-matter but in teaching methods. She must be prepared to give voluntary leaders every opportunity to carry out the responsibilities they have taken on. It is a task that calls for courage, organizational ability, and initiative of the highest type.

Though the responsibilities of the home demonstration agent have been and will continue to be primarily to rural folk, city families are turning to her increasingly for help. "Urban women have discovered the home demonstration agent," runs a vein of thought from Maine to California, from Minnesota to Texas. Some States have added urban home demonstration agents or assistant home demonstration agents

to meet increasing demands for help from urban homemakers. In most counties in which home demonstration work with urban women is being carried on, the home demonstration agent has added this work to an already full program. How long she can continue to do this without lowering the quality of her work remains to be seen.

### ***More training for the home demonstration agent***

To do the job ahead of her, the home demonstration agent will need additional training in the social sciences—economics, sociology, cultural anthropology, psychology, education, and political science. Increasingly, colleges of home economics have included basic courses in these fields. Because of other home economics requirements, however, the time devoted to these courses by the undergraduate student is limited. Hence, home demonstration agents will need to be encouraged to build up their background in these subjects through reading, discussion, and in-service training courses. It is to be expected that the agents will find it possible to return in increased numbers from time to time to the college campus for a summer school, a quarter, a semester, or a year to “refuel” for the tasks ahead.

### ***Home demonstration work as a profession***

Extension work has been and will continue to be a challenging profession for a young woman interested in rural people and concerned with a healthy rural society. The extension field requires workers who are of an inquiring mind and students of human nature as well as of books. Imagination, resourcefulness, and executive ability are needed. An open mind and an understanding heart are requisites.

In the future, as in the past, opportunities for service to rural people through home demonstration work will be great. Progress in many States has been made in recent years in the payment of salaries to home demonstration agents in line with their responsibilities, their educational background, their leadership abilities, and the salaries paid home economists in other fields. Much remains to be done, however, if the Extension Service is to obtain and keep the type of agent needed for the job to be done.

Rewards other than monetary rewards are no less real to the home demonstration agent, if somewhat intangible. The satisfaction that comes in having the respect and confidence of the people with whom she works and in working with those close to the soil, and the joy she experiences in a job well done are values not to be regarded lightly.